



118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A Anaconda, MT 59711
ph: 406.563.5259 fx: 406.563.5476
<http://www.medamembers.org>

MEDA represents over 230 members, who are actively involved in local economic activity, community development, job retention and job creation for Montana.

March 25, 2013

TO: Chairman David Howard and members of the House Human Services Committee
RE: MEDA Support for HB590 -- Access Health Montana Program

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA), an organization of over 230 economic and community development practitioners from across our state, is pleased to support HB590. This support comes to you through the unanimous recommendation of our Board of Directors.

MEDA is supportive of HB 590 and Access Health Montana for many reasons, including the following:

- 70,000 more Montanans will have access to quality health care.
- 5,000 new jobs will be created next year and nearly 13,000 new jobs in the next decade.
- Access Health Montana will end the cost-shift we currently have that is caused by those without health insurance seeking high-cost emergency room care when they're sick, rather than visiting a doctor for preventative care.
- This proposal will allow for the first increase in the WWAMI Program in over 20 years, enabling more Montana students to attend medical school. It also expands the medical residency program in our state, which has proven effective at encouraging physicians to stay in Montana to serve our rural and underserved areas.

In addition to the expansion and greater efficiency of our state's health care system through HB590, MEDA believes this proposal is a wise use of federal Medicaid dollars. We think it is important to take this opportunity to invest in the health care of Montana residents rather than having our designated funds used elsewhere. It is also worth noting that this proposal includes a circuit-breaker termination provision that ends the expanded Medicaid services should the federal government fail to fund its share.

Access Health Montana will transform the delivery of care, improve patient outcomes and contain costs, all while expanding our economy through the creation of thousands of jobs. As we know, this economic activity will have a significant ripple effect, increasing development opportunities across many sectors.

We urge your strong support for HB590.

For MEDA,

Tracy McIntyre, President

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